

## **PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT**

Wisconsin's Comprehensive Planning "smart growth" law requires public participation in every stage of the development of a plan. Specifically, Wisconsin Statutes, Section 66.1001(4) (a)...

"The governing body of a local government unit shall adopt written procedures that are designed to foster public participation, including open discussion, communication programs, information services, and public meetings for which advance notice has been provided, in every stage of the preparation of a comprehensive plan. The written procedures shall provide for a wide distribution of proposed, alternative, or amended elements of a comprehensive plan and shall provide an opportunity for written comments on the plan to be submitted by members of the public to the governing body and for the governing body to respond to such written comments."

Waukesha County and the local municipalities understand that public participation is very important in the planning process. The biggest challenge in this process is making citizens understand that this process collectively benefits all communities in Waukesha County as well as setting the stage for the physical development of their community.

In the early stages of the planning process it is important to enhance public awareness. News releases, newsletters, websites and display exhibits are tools that are effective at creating public awareness. A citizen representation on the planning element subcommittees to focus on public participation is necessary to implement this public awareness campaign.

Education is the central focus of any public participation effort. The citizens need a better understanding of the current and past growth and change trends that occurred in Waukesha County. News releases, fact sheets, newsletters, comprehensive planning website, and display exhibits at libraries, local government offices, and regional events are valuable tools in educating the public. The public participation function will be the responsibility of the Comprehensive Development Plan Advisory Committee.

Giving citizens the opportunity to help identify key community issues and develop a vision of what Waukesha County and the local communities should look like in 20 years will be a very intensive effort. The most effective way to get this done is to hold a series of focus groups. The UW-Extension Land Information and Computer Graphics Facility has a model that projects development trends and allows for public input. Citizens could also make comments on the planning web site. The visions developed by these focus groups would be shared through the use of news releases, displays, and fact sheets.

The ability to use the information from the visioning sessions is crucial in making citizens of the county feel like this is their plan. As the county develops alternative strategies it is important to provide information and education to the public. This again will be done through news releases, the planning website, fact sheets, and open houses.

The final step that requires extensive public input is the draft plan review and plan adoption process. In this step, local units of government and citizens review the plan. Public education will provide information to help citizens understand the review process and describe plan specifics. Public input will be solicited through open houses and other

public events. The web site will also allow citizens the opportunity to comment. The draft plan will also be available for review at local government offices and public libraries.

In summary, the public participation steps for the comprehensive development planning process include:

1. Education on current and past growth and change trends in Waukesha County.
2. Visioning focus group sessions that include defining rural and urban character.
3. Utilizing visioning information in developing plan goals and objectives.
4. Citizen and local government review of the draft comprehensive plan.